

25th September 2020

Dear Parents and Carers,

I am writing to update you all on the current situation at Rackham and in the Local Authority and to add further detail to the plan of action we have in place for suspected and positive cases of Covid-19 within our school community.

Suspected cases:

As you will all be aware, we have had several cases of pupils in school displaying symptoms similar to that of Covid-19. Given the fact that Covid-19 symptoms can be very similar to those of a common cold, I would like to make it clear that it is entirely normal for us to have children showing these symptoms at any point in the school year, and particularly as the Autumn cold season kicks into action. When a pupil or adult displays any of the current documented Covid-19 symptoms, they are not permitted to enter school and are asked to book a test. This is in line with national guidance issued by the Department for Education and the Local Authority.

At Rackham, we had initially planned to inform parents of every suspected case within your child's bubble. However, the Local Authority have recently advised against this and it has fast become apparent that this level of communication is not sustainable. Moving forward, we would like all parents to assume that there are several suspected cases in school at any given time.

There have been no positive cases at Rackham to date and this is something to celebrate and be thankful for. In line with Local Authority guidance, as of Monday 28th September, we will only write to you where test results are confirmed as Positive.

We understand that parents would prefer to be kept up to date regularly and that it is vital for a school to communicate transparently with its community and so for this reason, we have decided to inform all parents of the number of suspected cases recorded at Rackham each week, as well as the number of household members who are isolating because of a suspected case, for each year group bubble. This information will be shared with your weekly Key Stage Newsletters which are sent to parents every Friday.

The main symptoms of coronavirus are:

- High temperature: This is when a patient's chest or back feels hot to touch.
- A new, continuous cough: This means coughing a lot for more than an hour, or 3 or more coughing episodes in 24 hours (if you usually have a cough, it may be worse than usual).
- Loss or change to your sense of smell or taste: This means you've noticed you cannot smell or taste anything, or things smell or taste different to normal.

If you, your child, a household member or a member of your support bubble develops any of these symptoms, you should **notify the school immediately**, and arrange a test by visiting <https://www.nhs.uk/ask-for-a-coronavirus-test> or by phoning 119. You must self-isolate if you have coronavirus symptoms or live in the same household as someone who does.

If your child has displayed symptoms and we have asked them not to attend school:

- You should isolate for 14 days, along with anyone who forms part of your support bubble. This can end for everyone, your child included, if the test result comes back **negative**.

- Where a child/member of staff tests **positive** they must self-isolate for 10 days.
- Where a child/member of staff have been identified as a close contact to a positive case, they will be sent home and advised to self-isolate for 14 days. The contact's household/support bubble will not need to self-isolate unless the child/member of staff subsequently develops symptoms.

Positive Cases:

When there is a positive case within Rackham, we will inform the whole school, and will let parents know if it is a child/adult within their bubble or not. Pupils who are not in the same bubble are expected to continue attending school as normal.

We will then work with health professionals from Public Health England to ascertain which pupils will need to remain at home and isolate. It is anticipated this will be the whole bubble as we have no way of being able to trace contacts over playtimes and lunchtimes where all children play together on the playground.

We will notify all those identified as close contacts of the positive result and keep you informed of the process moving forward. Every positive case in school is risk assessed and the appropriate action taken to safeguard pupils and staff.

We are very aware of the difficulties parents are facing when trying to book a test and we sympathise. Unfortunately, we are not in a position to be able to ensure a test is made available for you. I would like to remind parents that it is important to have the test as soon as possible if you have any symptoms of Covid-19. The test needs to be done within the first 5 days of having symptoms. If this is not possible, the whole household will need to then isolate for 14 days.

Keeping our school safe relies on everyone staying safe outside school too. By adhering to the measures set out by government you are helping us reduce the spread of infection so we can continue to protect your children and our staff.

As the country prepares for a second wave of the virus, we are politely requesting that from Monday 28th September, all adults wear a face covering/face visor when visiting or entering the school premises (unless you are exempt). We hope that you will agree this is a sensible measure. Even with a one way system, and 'bubbled' areas of the school, we are unable to stop the crossing of year groups at the beginning and end of the day and this measure would add a layer of security that we feel is necessary to keep students and staff as safe as possible. I am confident that our parent community will fully appreciate the need to be vigilant in our efforts to prevent spread of the virus into the school where we have a number of vulnerable children and adults.

Please ensure your children are wearing layers or have a jumper/fleece or hoodie in school as we are ensuring all classrooms are well ventilated and it is likely to become colder as Autumn progresses.

Thank you for your continued understanding and cooperation.

Yours sincerely,



Mrs B Harrison
Headteacher

